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To: Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

From: Richard J. Scaldini

Date: February 15, 2012

Re: Concerning the Budget Proposal for the Arts

The decision to include the Commission on Culture & Tourism into the Office of Economic and Community Development is a major step in recognizing the importance of artists and arts organizations to the Connecticut economy. It moves us away from the antiquated notion of the arts as a luxury to be indulged only in good times. The Governor and OECD recognize that artistic activity shapes our society in important ways relating to education, creativity, innovation, and community engagement. Accordingly, I submit this statement both to applaud the 2012-2013 budget and to cite some serious concerns.

A budget designed to mobilize the arts for community and economic development must look to the arts in their diversity. Artists and arts organizations make a wide range of contributions to the civic environment, as is reflected in the diversity of media, performance venues, and institutions constituting the Connecticut creative community. There is no part of the state that does not serve as home to theaters, museums, individual artists, and community arts organizations. The arts are therefore most definitely a distinctive component of the Connecticut brand.

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Setting aside for now the amounts budgeted, it is unwise and unproductive to dissolve the discrete budget line and sub-items for the arts into a single, undefined, marketing account. The re-allocation of the arts funds makes all too easy the neglect of artistic sectors that play different but complementary roles in place-making, education, and quality of life improvements.

For example, the OECD's current public art initiative promises to have a notable impact on urban environments. But it requires follow-through over time. There are many alternative and equally powerful art forms, arising from the broader creative community, which can extend and leverage this initiative in our museums, schools, healthcare institutions, and theaters.

I urge the legislature and OECD to restore the 2012-2013 arts budget in its detail. Connecticut's arts brand is not simply a matter of special initiatives. The arts in Connecticut constitute a fabric of urban and rural activities generated by many small organizations, the sustainability of which depends on operating grants from the state. A program of purely catalytic grant-making – though highly desirable in many respects – will put these smaller organizations at a severe disadvantage. We need a diversity in funding options that mirrors the diversity of our institutions. Accordingly, there must be a place in the budget where all these alternatives – vying for all forms of support – can compete for resources.

In tandem with a place in the budget, the OECD should move to shape and develop the Office of the Arts as a stimulating and innovative agent for energizing the arts community. At a minimum, we know that the State is required to have a distinct entity devoted to the arts as a vehicle for receiving federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. This is a minimum role. We should not miss the opportunity to craft an arts agency that provides a forum for policy debate on the arts and mobilizes the artistic community in support of economic development, education, and community development.

It is essential that the administration and legislature endow the arts with the budgetary and institutional standing necessary to make a full, creative, and competitive contribution to state policy. As you pursue an arts-driven “place-making” policy in

Connecticut's cities, make a place as well for the arts in Connecticut's fiscal and policy-making institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. L. Cerdini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "L".

President, Spearpoint Strategy Advisors, LLC
Director, Connecticut Arts Alliance
President, Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra